/37 cont./

777 been born; God save me from such a marriage." And so he
776 planned to kill the newborn baby; when everyone in the
539 house had fallen asleep, he slipped quietly in, carried the child out, ripped open her belly, and threw it upon the flat roof of the hut. Then the two thieves went on their way. The child's wailing awakened the women, who found her, sewed up the wound with silk thread, and thus saved her from death. And no matter how hard the thief about whom the above-mentioned prophecy was made tried to find a wife, he was /38/ unsuccessful. Meanwhile the girl who he thought was dead reached marriageable age and one day somehow met the thief. He immediately fell in love with her and married her. Then it was shown how inevitably every predestination and decision made by the "creator-forgers" is fulfilled.

VII.

Prayers in Honor of the Deities

782 Prayer is the name given to those religious ceremonies and rites accompanied by sacrifices in honor of the gods which are performed according to a definite pattern set and sanctified from olden times.

[776] Each deity may independently show, within his sphere of activity, grace or wrath toward man; for instance, he may send sickness or misfortune on him or his cattle, etc.

[787] The Abkhaz easily determine by special signs whether the deities' anger is the result of deviations from the fixed pattern

[688] of the religious rites. To avert the wrath of the gods caused by omissions in prayers and sacrifices, they must repeat the offerings and complete whatever was omitted the first time; uncorrected omissions and mistakes in ritual weigh heavily as guilt felt toward the angry gods, even upon generations

[755] far removed from the sinners. If anyone falls ill in consequence of neglect in ritual toward one or another god, he

[753] must offer him a sacrifice in order to recover. If he is

/38 cont./

782 755 753 unable to perform that act because of his sickness, he then presents something as a pledge, saying, "If you (God) are sending this (sickness) because of my guilt, then relieve me; I shall pray to you as is fitting and as the sorcerer will instruct me." But when he does not know which deity is angry and is causing his sickness, he says, "No matter what caused this illness, I shall do whatever the sorcerers may recommend." The pledge is specially set aside as a sacred object until his vow is fulfilled. The performers of prayers during such religious rituals are men or women, depending upon the sex of the deity in whose honor the ceremony is performed.

I shall proceed to a description of the ceremonies themselves.

1.

/39/

782 755 The Ceremony in Honor of Mother Earth

A sinless woman, taking six nuts and a few grains of millet, leads the sick one to an alder tree. Here she carries the three nuts and several grains of millet around the tree in the name of the earth; then she does the same thing around a nut-tree (walnut) in the name of Adabna, begging him to have pity on the sick person. She then makes [532 789] a richly-dressed doll in the image of a man, buries it in the earth for the "liberation" of the sick person, and says, "Play and amuse yourself with this instead of with the sick one." After this, a large millet-loaf is baked -- "the bread of Mother Earth" -- and two other long loaves of bread for Adabna. The same woman takes a piece from each of the four sides of the first loaf, both the loaves in honor of Adabna, a candle, and incense, and with the sick person goes to the crossing of three roads, where she places the pieces of the millet-loaf at one road, the two loaves of Adabna at the second, and at the third she lights the candles and places chevyaki (shoes) there, saying; "Mistress Earth, these are your shoes!" She then places the sick person on his knees

/39 cont./

782 among the articles so laid out, with a "chikila" (a kind of
755 veil) on his head, and begs, "Adgil-ankhu, Atula-ankhuse, grant him your favor! Give him firmess of head, heart, and body! Give him color, skin, and bone! Give him back the will to speak and to work! Give him strength! Deliver him from evil," etc. In the same way she also prays to Adabna. After this, she removes the chikila from the sick person with a nut-twig, raises him, strikes him on the back with a whip, and says, "Go, from this day I grant you freedom (azati)," and then both go home. At home a loaf of millet-bread is broken in two; two women each take a half and stand on the two sides of the hearth opposite each other; the sick person passes three times between them under the loaf, while one of the women exclaims, "Give me the one who has assumed the Hebrew belief," and the other, "Give me the convert to Christianity."

●753 The Abkhaz is convinced that the invisible being that
755 settled in the sick man hastens immediately upon leaving him to enter someone else, and so, to help him find a new victim, they pray to him at the crossroads, where there is a continuous /40/ traffic of people, and, subsequently, a victim is always found it is unnecessary to search very long. And since an illness can be caught from a spot where a person accidentally fell or sat down, the rite of appeasing the
[823] earth must be performed on the very same spot of the falling or sitting from which the sickness originated; the doll must be buried on exactly the same spot. This is why, in order not to catch something evil from the spot where he sat down,
[789] the Abkhaz spits three times on getting up and says, "Here stood the house and courtyard of my grandfather!"

2.

The Ceremony in Honor of the Water

782 When someone is ill for a long time with a fever, a
755 female fortune-teller is asked for advice and help; she usually
791

/40 cont./

782 prescribes a prayer to the water, which is thought to be the
755 cause of the illness. Since the protectress of the waters,
[791] the "Mother of Water," is a woman, a sinless old woman is invited to the ceremony.

776 A large, clear, inaccessible fresh-water lake is thought
[778] to be the residence of the "Mother of Water"; she may also dwell in a pure spring, untouched by anything unclean, such as a pig, etc. The "Mother of Water" sometimes comes out of her dwelling to the shore, and at that time anyone may see her. This is how the Abkhaz describe this "Mother of Water." She is a most beautiful, bewitching woman; her locks are incomparable and chestnut in color; her eyes are laughing. The Abkhaz who has been bewitched by her talks
●753 to his comrades thus: "Eh, brothers, I have been vanquished
776 by the 'Mother of the Water,' and from now on I no longer
539 belong to your society. Recently I rode into a dense forest and saw a table spread there under a big oak; a mirror and a lighted candle stood nearby; the 'Mother of the Water' was sitting in front of the mirror, smiling at her own beauty and combing her long hair, which reached the ground. My arms fell to my sides from exhaustion; I could not take my eyes from that wonderful vision. When she saw me, she quickly arranged her hair and came towards me. I felt giddy... Without a word she raised all ten fingers, asking me, 'Are you willing to be my husband for ten years or not?' I shook my head, but she would not stop, and with the proper number of fingers raised, she offered me in turn nine, eight, seven years, and so on /41/ of marriage. As I kept on refusing, she finally raised her last little finger and fixed her gaze upon me. I immediately gave my consent..." (1).

1. "Etnograf. pis'ma iz Abkhazii /Ethnographical letters from Abkhazia/," Konst. Machavariani, Droeba, 1884-1885.

755
782 The "pure" old woman who was invited to the ceremony,

/41 cont./

515 782 823 [783] Fearing to defile it, the Abkhaz avoids bathing in running water; if he bathes, upon coming out /42/ of the water he takes three stones and says, "I sinned against you today; I went into the water and bathed, but you, forgive me." With this prayer, he passes the pebbles around his head with his hands and throws them into the water.

3.

The Ceremony in Honor of the Rainbow

● 753 [755] [782] The ceremony in honor of the rainbow, which is not obligatory for all, is performed for the greater part on persons whose sickness, according to the female fortune-teller, is caused by the rainbow. A prolonged yellowness of the face, a weakening of the organism, instability of character -- the [821] Abkhaz attributes all these to the fact that the sick person entered water at the very moment when the rainbow was drinking from it.

755 782 "Sinless" old women, having planned a sacrifice and promised a prayer, lead the sick person out to a brook; they take with them two fried capons, two stuffed loaves of unleavened bread in the shape of a tongue, and other provisions, as in the performance of the ceremony in honor of the water. On both sides of the brook, clean objects are laid out, such as clothes, silver, etc., a little bridge made of thread is thrown over the river from one bank to another. Having prepared all this, the praying-woman, with a doll that has been prepared beforehand in her hands, walks around the sick person, who is kneeling down covered with a piece of calico, and prays for him to the rainbow, known by the name Eliaphshi; then she takes a candle and addresses a similar prayer to the "Mistress Mother of the Water," and her "lord husband." After praying over the provisions she takes some [789] of each dish and throws it into the water; she places the doll in a pumpkin, and, after adorning the latter with lighted

/43 cont./

782 from the treetop. May the fresh twig, when I step on it with
824 my foot, first grow stronger and then, being strengthened, grow fresh (soft), etc."

6.

782 A Prayer in Honor of Adnqa or (the same thing) "the
755 Outer Ones"

[775] The souls of the dead, the "outer ones," are often the
[753] cause of sickness in man and his cattle. They often become angry, and the outward signs of such anger are frequent yawning, sleepiness, and general exhaustion visited upon the culprit. If the one afflicted does not satisfy the angered "outer ones" with offerings and prayers, an inevitable death awaits him. On one of the Saturdays a meal is prepared of young rams' meat, chicken, sour milk, and the meat of a cow, if the soul of a woman is angered, and all these provisions are laid out on a tablecloth under the eaves, on both sides of which are placed a dress and valuable /44/ objects.

The sick man or woman is placed in the middle of a circle and either a man or a woman, according to the sex of the sick person, prays and begs the living and the dead (Angi-phsngis) to have mercy upon the sick and to grant him health and to accept the food prepared for them. The person pronouncing the prayer for the sick one then passes his hand over the back of the sick person and gives him freedom from his sickness ("azati"). If the ailment is thought to be caused by the soul of a prince or of some other personage of
[825] high rank, a tethered horse is untied and released in a field at the concluding words of the prayer: "This (horse) is for your soul." According to Abkhaz belief, such a horse soon swells up and dies.

/47 cont./

782 and light, well-being and success in everything; grant
821 beauty, charm, and elegance to our maidens so that, like you, they may shine, glitter, and warm people." In the prayer to the moon, they express the wish that the children should become like it in brilliance.

/48/ 15.

Prayer to Khphath and Khvnash

782 This prayer is offered on the Saturday of the week of
[796] Thomas, with cheese, bread, wine, candles, etc. brought as offerings. The aim is to solicit health and prosperity for the family. On one of the following Saturdays a similar prayer is addressed to Khvnash. Khphath and Mdzhath are
[551] men's names in Abkhazia.

16.

"Ananaha"

782 Anan means "mother." The oldest woman of the
776 household places some money on a loaf of bread (Anan l phara = money of Anan) and goes into the kitchen-garden where she places three cucumber-leaves on the loaf of bread and the same number on her own head. She then fastens a lighted candle to a cucumber stalk and, holding incense in her hands, prays, "Mothers and creators, do not let me have grief from my sons: do not cast me into sorrow because of them, but let me see them prosper." A similar prayer is said to Ashatsanha, the god-creator or god-father. A cow and money are offered in sacrifice to him. During Lent, the village maidens also used to pray to the "Mother of the Waters" that she might grant them long and thick hair.

17.

Prayer for the Ear

• 753 The Abkhaz says, "ahsa r lmha i klou," which means

/48 cont./
753 "hung on the girls' ears." Rheumatic pains in the knees, instability of character, general weakness of the organism of a person, etc. -- all these are consequences of a
789 "weighty cause." To avert the sickness, a button is fastened to the ear like an earring. An innocent and sinless woman
755 leads the ailing person to a nut-bush and makes him kneel;
782 she drives seven /49/ sticks of nut-wood into the ground around him, fastens a lighted candle to each of them, and prays
[776] on behalf of the sick person to hanipha, the genius, walking along the rocks.

18.

Prayer in Honor of the Supreme Being

776
753 This supreme being is believed to be the cause of all kinds of sickness in man. When the body-temperature of a seriously sick person fluctuates greatly and he is alternately thrown into a fever and chills, when he faints or loses consciousness and regains it momentarily, and then begins to toss and become delirious, to sing songs, to mumble prayers, etc., the Abkhaz believe that all these severe pathological conditions are unmistakable signs of action by a superior force, by the supreme deities (Antsa r mzz) on the sick person -- "there is a divine cause." The Abkhaz are convinced that this "divine cause" has taken up its abode in the sick
755 person and therefore they say, Antsa drthoup, i.e., "a god
[787] came to visit." When the female fortune-teller confirms that the cause of the sickness is indeed that "a god took up his abode" in the sick person, then everyone in the house must assume a gay appearance and rejoice instead of grieving, for "where the god has taken up his abode, there can be nothing but rejoicing." Therefore the village youth gathers in the house of such a patient and all begin to sing and dance, and even the sick person is made to take part in the dances and singing, if he is strong enough to do so.

[782] The prayer-sacrifice is carried out near the house on the edge of a forest. The offering is a goat or a kid, a

[765 cont.] The mother, The wife, and the foster mother mourn at the grave for forty days in the morning and in the evening, and for the same length of time, or sometimes for a whole year, food for the deceased is put on the table during meals.

[766] The first memorial service takes place on the fortieth day, the second one during the second year, usually in the autumn. On the evening preceding the latter (ap's-khuvra = assigning to the soul), the clothes, the horse with the saddle, and the weapons of the deceased are laid out, there is mourning in the house and at the grave, and sacrificial animals are slaughtered. A party of village members in mourning clothes and barefoot bring up animals and food; among them a man carries lighted candles on a twig-shaped holder, as do the oxen on their horns. The next day the horse of the dead man is led around in a circle three times in a field, and the relatives follow it, lamenting in mourning clothes; after this, the soul of the dead, which until then had remained invisibly among them for the time being, has finally departed from the earth. After the memorial feast the youths and men hold oratory exercises, shooting matches, and races, as among the Khevsur (see p. 738 [untranslated], and below, p.30).

The burial grounds, which contain the graves for each kin group, usually lie on elevations and are fenced in. Small houses of planks with shingle roofs--in contrast to the usual building style--are erected over the graves, which are themselves lined with boards, and fruit trees are planted nearby.

Among the Abkhaz, too, there is the belief that the souls of the dead have the same needs as the living, and for this reason they build these grave-shelters, lay slices of melon and cucumber on the graves, and for a year after death put food for them on the table during the meals. At the second memorial celebration the father of the house places in the yard a millet-dumpling over which wine has been poured and pieces of the heart and liver from the sacrificial animal. If the souls are neglected, they come to the house at night and whistle, whereupon food and wine is given to them. When the souls, the "outer ones," are angered, they bring about weakness and sickness among animals and men. Then one tries to console

[770 cont.]

231 (atlar-tšoup'), they lay the animal on a quickly erected, three-
[782] meter-high framework or in a tree. The owner sacrifices an ox and prays to be spared in the future; then they eat the meat of the sacrificial animal, bread, and cheese, drink wine, and feast
766 the entire day. The Abkhaz proceed in the same way for a person struck by lightning, but no one may weep lest the god become angry (see p. 87).

789 During drought one also turns to Ap'i to send rain; an
[785] ox is sacrificed, and at the feast songs of thanks and praise (antšva-ryššva) are sung in alternating chant. In order to evoke rain magic similar to that customarily practiced among the Balkan peoples is used (cf. also p. 64). The girls from the village stricken with drought place a female doll embodying the drought on a donkey and lead it to the river; here they put the doll on a raft made of twigs and straw, ignite it, and allow it to drift. They pull the donkey by force through the water, and if he brays, there will be rain.

755 Various gods are called upon in case of illness. Ague,
[753] delirium, and the like accompanying serious illness are attributed to the presence of the supreme god (Antsar mz) in the body of the sufferer. In order to cure him, they sing and dance about him and even force him to do the same; then they sacrifice bread
[784] and a goat or sheep in the vicinity of the house, during which no woman may be present; an old man with a candle circles the sick person and pleads with the god to forgive him and deliver him. He also prays afterwards to Michael-Gabriel.

In case of fever they look for help from the "Mother of
[776] the Waters"; she lives, according to them, in a clear lake or spring, is beautiful, has brown hair and laughing eyes, and likes to live for a while with a man, like the mermaids. An old woman touches the water with some object belonging to the feverish person and begs the goddess to release him if she has enthralled him. Then she ladles up a few drops of water on some alder-leaves and holds them over the fire in the house so that the fever may leave as quickly as the water on the leaves. Finally the old woman moves away quickly, with the wish that the fever, too,

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

539 [789] benefactor, the moon, the Abkhasians fire at the monster and thereby drive him away." [1]

(3) The Moon and the Sun. A beautiful Abkhasian widow woman had a son and a daughter, who often absented themselves from home for the whole day; they would go off early in the morning and return only late in the evening. No amount of coaxing or tenderness on the part of the mother sufficed to keep the children at home or stop them from indulging in their daily adventure, so she decided to shadow them. She found they were seated under the shadow of an ancient oak, in a thick forest, enjoying themselves in an agreeable pastime with the moon and the sun. Before them were all sorts of eatables. The mother, flying into a passion, flung fresh dung at the moon and the sun. The sun-sister, being a more fastidious creature, washed herself, but the less particular moon-brother did not do so, and hence arose the dark patches on the moon; the brother, the moon, and the sister, the sun,[2] then soared up to the sky for ever, while the widow and her children returned home."

821 Here I will also note that the Abkhasians always welcome the new moon by looking at its reflection through a mirror, or over a silver piece.

[753] A certain mainly infantile disease, similar to convulsions, is called by the Abkhasians *ámzakra*, i.e. " to be caught by the moon ".

(*e*) *Àmra-nə̀hwa*, Prayer to the Sun.

796 [816] When he has finished the invocation addressed to Àmza (the moon), the supplicant takes the sun-shaped cake, and, with the women surrounding him, he says: " Thou, Àmra, *Àyt'ar inisw̲akhwədà*, the great part of the great *Àyt'ar*, grant warmth, and caress the women of our family! Increase our cattle," etc., and then spills *k'warpa* (*a-k'warpà*) in the usual manner, uttering *wootsw*.

According to D. I. Gulia, in the village of Dchilou they use the form *Amera* instead of *Àmra*.

(*f*) *Andə̀p'a-nàga*.

[816] After that the supplicant takes *alak̲wára* (a large mortar) and, addressing himself to the god *Andə̀p'a-nàga*, says: " Thou, the great part of the great god *Àyt'ar*, send us the warmth of thine eyes and of

[1] Exactly what *Atäwyə* denotes is difficult to explain. In connection with the above quoted tale, the etymology of this word may, however, perhaps elucidate its significance. *Atə̀* denotes the barn- or screech-owl; *wy* may be the root from the word *a-owyə̀* (man); consequently *atäwyə* may denote " man-owl ". And by *atäwyə* is, perhaps, understood the sister devouring the brother-moon.

[2] Their gender is often confused: sometimes the moon and the sun are sisters or brothers, sometimes the moon is brother and the sun sister.

[3] I think the Georgian word *mizezi*, cause, is derived from the Abkhasian *amezz*, cause (from *àmza*, moon). (It is doubtful! Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 - RI3 Abkhas RI3
AdzVibzha

778 is that the Ilori " icon " is omnipotent, and they, therefore, try hard not to incur its wrath. It is inflexibly just and punishes harshly those who deviate from the law; it is a goddess of equity, as it were; a 778 kind of Themis, and in the practical life of the southern Abkhasians 629 and of the Samurzaqanoans, there is, therefore, no " saint ", no 690 " icon ", no deity equal to the Ilori " icon "; it determines finally and irrevocably all matters, whether civil or criminal, which the crown court has not been able to settle to the satisfaction of the popular idea of fair play. Even in the case of matters upon which judgment has been passed by crown courts, but where the decision has not satisfied the disputing parties, appeal is made to its tribunal. The trial is conducted as follows: A kind of arbitration court is set up which imposes upon 782 the accused the obligation to take a propitiatory oath before the Ilori " icon ". If the matter is unimportant it is determined by a village tribunal which provides one or two co-swearers; but if the matter is serious (insult to one's honour, murder, etc.) the representatives of the parties participate in the trial with the judges. " Swearing in " follows, but the number of co-swearers increases; thus, for instance, 1–2 *t'avadi-s*, 2–3 *aznauri-s*, 5–6 peasants, 1–2 namesakes, 1–2 maternal relations, 1–2 relations of the female line of the *gvari*, etc., are frequently appointed as co-swearers. The oath is administered on *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*. The accused swears before the icon that he is innocent, the co-swearers confirm his declaration, and there the matter ends. If the accused is unable to take the oath, he submits obediently to the punishment imposed upon him. From the day of the taking of the oath onwards the plaintiff breaks off all relationship with the defendant and his co-swearers. " The icon is between us (parts, separates us)," says the orthodox Abkhaz. It is impossible to evade this custom; it is an Abkhasian's profound conviction that infringement of this custom (the re-establishment of relationship), as also 786 a false oath, will not pass unpunished; the " icon " punishes with 783 sickness and even with death, if the accused does not come to his senses in time and confess himself in the wrong. At the death of all the members of the guilty family, the wrath of the " icon " recoils on the plaintiff. To avert the chastisement of the " icon ", as of Abkhasian gods in general, the guilty person must pray and make offerings to the " icon "; he must also compensate his opponent's material losses and obtain the latter's consent thereto; they both set out for Ilori with gifts, prescribed by sorceresses, and they pray there to the " icon " for forgiveness of their sins; they bring goats, bullocks, and money. This is called the reciprocal forgiveness-prayer (*cyba-nəlwara*). From this day normal relations are restored between the parties. If one of the parties does not agree to make peace, the other party can *akhs-dchəkhəra*, " buy back his head," i.e. redeem

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Aàzvibzha

oak the Megrelians built a church in its honour, in which this icon rests to this day. It has not forgotten the Svans whom it often visits." My Megrelian informant is an inhabitant of Salkhino.

9. *Àhwsa-rəmshap'*

Abkhasians call the first Sunday after Easter Low Sunday, *Àhwsa-rəmshap'*, i.e. Pascha for women. This day is set apart for public games. Early in the morning everybody assembles in the public square where they indulge in all sorts of sport, chiefly, however, horse racing and tournaments. Next day the Abkhasians go back to work, and ordinary life is resumed.

The public games (on holidays) are continued till Whit Monday.

10. *Àdzyla-nəhwa*

In connection with *Àmshap'* mention may be made of two supplications, *Àdzyla-nəhwa* (cf. III (*d*)) and "*Supplication of the Leybaa*". I have not been lucky enough to have witnessed the latter ceremony, which, by the way, belongs to a cult of the Bzib Abkhasians.[1] The worship of the tree, so picturesquely described by ancient writers, such as Strabo, Procopius of Cæsarea, is preserved in a most conspicuous form with its sacred grove, in this supplication of the Leybaa *gvari*, as is also the name of the deity, in that of *Àdzyla-nəhwa*; *Àdzyla* denotes tree, *nəhwa* (*anəhwara*), praying, supplication. The deity of the tree itself is called *Àdzyla-intswakhwə*, wherein the latter part denotes "his (of the male rational being) part of god, deity". The Abkhasians in their religion personify and "intellectualize" all manifestations of life, and they strictly distinguish the gender of each of them.

In order to protect wanton children who roam about without restraint, and love to climb trees, the Abkhasians make offerings to the "spirit of the tree", entreating the "great part of the deity of the tree" to guard their children against falling off trees and hurting themselves. The objects offered are capon and cakes. The oak (*a-ɟ*) they consider as the sacred tree, to which they make the offering; walnut-trees (particularly the hazel-nut-tree) and yoke-elms are "pure" trees. If someone falls from the tree they must dig up some coal from under the spot where the person fell; if no coal is found, the accident is regarded as serious; and the person will not survive the fall. An offering is also made to the "spirit of the tree" in the case of certain illnesses, as directed by sorceresses, the sick person being supposed to have fallen ill through having incurred the wrath of the spirit.

[1] About this see the article by N. Pateyna, in the *Collaborator of the Transcaucasian Mission* (in Russian), 1912, pp. 107–112, 154–7.

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

6. *Akhyə Zoshən*

The Abkhasians ascribe diseases generally to supernatural influences or gods, but some diseases have their own special gods. The god of small-pox, for example, is *Akhyə Zoshən* (the golden Zoskhan), and also his consort, the goddess *Khanla Shkwəkwa* (Khania the white). How important are the gods of the Abkhasians may be judged from the following circumstance which took place during the spring of 1914 in one of the settlements of the village Jgerdi. Throughout the winter and spring of the year Abkhasia was in the grip of a severe epidemic of small-pox. In order to check the spread of the disease vaccinators were sent to the affected areas. The following account of what happened was described to me by P. Janashia, one of the vaccinators. A certain settlement, fearing that the gods might wreak vengeance upon them, refused to admit the vaccinators; they preferred to safeguard themselves against this terrible disease, *atswarp'shdzə* (small-pox), by the adoption of the gods. *Atswə* denotes skin, rind, and *ap'shdzə*, pretty, beautiful; the whole, in translation, denoting "that which decorates (beautifies) the skin".

By pooling their resources, the settlement raised enough money to buy a couple of snow-white goats and a sufficiency of provisions, and made an expedition into the forest. Here, amidst the quietude and peace of over-hanging leaves, a sumptuous feast was prepared for the divine guests. When everything was ready, and the victim had been placed, according to custom, on *ashwamkyadə'*, the head of the settlement said the prayer and made the offering to the gods. Nearby stood two bedsteads, adorned with silk bedclothes, on which sat two young women, an *amauri* and a peasant woman; their naked breasts were covered with silk handkerchiefs. The whole assembly knelt down, while the head of the settlement implored the gods to accept their offering by kissing the breasts of the most beautiful women of the settlement, and thus become, in accordance with the ancestral custom, adopted sons of the settlement. Near the "foster-mothers of gods" stood two of the finest horses, one with a side saddle. The sumptuous feast followed the ceremony of adoption, and afterwards the people, holding the horses by the bridle, on which were to be riding the newly adopted gods, *Akhyə Zoshən* and *Khanla Shkwəkwa*, escorted the precious guests to the accompaniment of song, far away from the settlement. Thus they "turned away", or warded off, the small-pox.

"You may not believe it," an Abkhaz from the settlement told me, "but this 'adoption' saved us from the small-pox; not one of us fell a victim to it. You, the learned, have caused our ruin by bringing down upon us the anger of the gods of our fathers," he concluded, with a deep sigh.